

Defending Jacob Study Guide

Defending Jacob by William Landay

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Plot Summary

The possibility of a “murder gene,” a parent’s responsibility for his children’s actions and the influence parents really have over the way children behave are all themes that are explored in the novel “Defending Jacob” by William Landay. The world of First District Attorney Andrew Barber is turned on its head when his son, Jacob, is accused of murdering a fellow classmate. For Barber, the accusation is not only a possible death sentence for his son but it also opens up an investigation into his family’s violent background, information he hoped he had buried. A strange twist at the end of the novel raises the question if there is ever a time when murder is justifiable.

Other children were always getting hurt around Jacob, his mother, Laurie, tells psychiatrist Elizabeth Vogel as they prepare for a trial in which Jacob is accused of fatally stabbing a classmate. Although First Assistant District Attorney Andrew Barber is certain his son is innocent, he is obviously uncomfortable when lawyers bring the violent nature of three generations of his family before him into the trial. Barber must face his father, whom he hasn’t seen since he was a small child, to ask for a DNA sample. In a twisted way of “helping” the grandson he’d never met, Barber’s father arranges a confession to be written by a neighborhood pedophile who had briefly been a suspect in the case. The confession clears Jacob’s name in court, but suspicion seems to linger, especially in the mind of his mother.

In a bizarre twist at the end of the story, a girl whom Jacob had been dating disappears from the Jamaican resort where the Barber family was vacationing to escape the stress of the trial. Hope Connor’s body washes up on shore about seven weeks later. While Barber insists her death was ruled a drowning, a botched investigation hints there might have been more to the story. Some say there is evidence that Hope’s windpipe was crushed before she ever went into the water. Laurie, sure that her son was responsible for Hope’s death, drives the family’s minivan into a concrete abutment, killing Jacob. The book raises more questions than it answers. Did Jacob really kill Ben? Was Laurie right in killing Jacob? Should she be indicted for murder?



Part One: Chapters 1 – 2

Summary

In Chapter 1, “In the Grand Jury,” Andy Barber is finally subpoenaed to the grand jury by Neal Logiudice, a man whom he had taught the ropes of being an assistant district attorney. At this point Barber is out of work, and Logiudice’s career is damaged beyond repair. While many in the profession make fun of Logiudice, Barber has a certain amount of respect for the man because they are so alike.

Although Barber feels that Logiudice has no case, and he believes the jurors feel the same way, Logiudice moves ahead with his questions just as Barber had taught him. Barber describes the day of April 12, 2007, when Benjamin Rifkin had been found murdered. Barber was serving as First District Attorney and was called to handle the case.

Logiudice suggests Barber should have refused the case because it was a conflict of interest since the boy was a classmate of Barber’s son, Jacob. Logiudice goes so far to suggest that Barber invoke his Fifth Amendment rights, a choice Barber does not take as he tells Logiudice he wants the truth to come out.

In Chapter 2, “Our Crowd,” Barber and his wife Laurie are visiting with the Rifkins in their home after the death of the son, Ben. The people know that Barber is handling the case and want to ask about it, but they don’t out of respect. In another room, Barber’s son is sitting away from the other children, paying attention only to his cell phone.

Barber tells Laurie he’s ready to go, but she decides to stay. While looking for his jacket, Barber accidentally walks in on the dead boy’s father. Rifkin asks Barber why someone would have killed his boy, who was so young and good. He questions Barber because he knows that Barber talks to these people on a daily basis. Rifkin also wants to know if he will ever be okay again.

That night, Laurie voices her concern that the school is being opened too soon after Ben’s murder. She suggests they should wait until the murderer is caught, which Barber says might take awhile.

Analysis

The first section of this novel is set in time one year after the murder of Benjamin Rifkin. The first few lines are taken from the transcript of a grand jury inquisition. Barber is being questioned though it is not clear of what crime or charge he is being accused. The author gives clues that both Barber and the grand jury know that the prosecutor, Logiudice, does not have a strong case. Barber seems to think that the charges will be thrown out by the grand jury. The next chapter is set just after the murder has taken place. Students and their families are attending the shiva at the Rifkin home. The most



significant part of this chapter is the way that Jacob is described at the home of the dead boy. While the other students are comforting each other or mourning, Jacob sits away from them, paying attention only to his cell phone.

One important thing to notice in the introductory chapter is the dynamics of the relationship between Barber and Logiudice. Although Barber is now out of a job, he had once been in a position above Logiudice in the District Attorney's office. Barber, in fact, is the one who trained Logiudice. Although Barber doesn't seem to have any specific dislike for Logiudice, Logiudice seems to be almost haughty in attitude toward his former teacher. Notice also in this part of the novel that Barber indicates that Logiudice's career has already been ruined, leaving questions not only as to what has led to this point, but also what has happened in Logiudice's professional career.

Significant also is Rifkin's discussion with Barber about what a criminal might be thinking to make them kill an innocent boy like Ben. Barber admits to Rifkin that even though he works closely with criminals, he still has no idea what causes them to do the things they do. Rifkin also looks to Barber for some indication that he will survive what has happened to his family. Barber can only tell Rifkin that some families come through such an experience in one piece while others do not. He is unable, however, to give Rifkin the assurance for which he is looking.

While this novel deals with law and the terms of law, author Landay writes so that even those not well versed in the terms of criminal law can understand. He explains the purpose of the grand jury and leads the reader through the ways that this jury can decide when dealing with a case. Although grand juries don't often return what is called a no bill, where there isn't enough evidence to indict, Barber has a feeling that the charge for which he is being called to testify will not be prosecuted.

Discussion Question 1

What is your first impression of Jacob Barber?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the dynamics of the relationship between Barber and Logiudice.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the community of Newton. What is it like? What are the people like?



Vocabulary

Subpoenaed, irreplaceable, pursing, tooled, contempt, fallacy, indictment, tainted, undeterred, tactic, objectivity, binary, stultifying, ambivalent, gangly, camaraderie, incitement, stoic, acquiescing, advocate



Part One: Chapters 3 – 4

Summary

In Chapter 3, “Back to School,” Barber wakes his son up from a nightmare on the first day the students are to go back to school after the murder. Both students and parents are surprised by the huge police presence at the school. Barber notes that Jacob has the hint of a smile on his face and interprets it as Jacob’s pleasure that the normal routine of the school has been interrupted.

The mothers discuss the way they kept their kids from violence and guns just to have them exposed to the murder of a schoolmate. Laurie makes the comment that she believes there is not much a parent can do to influence their child’s outcome. The parents discuss how badly the Rifkins must be feeling and try to determine if any of them knew Ben any better than any of the others.

In Chapter 4, “Mindfuck,” Barber describes the Middlesex County Courthouse. It is an unsympathetic concrete building with few windows that leaks asbestos. Barber goes in early to look at the Rifkin file. He notes the case is oddly quiet. He feels as if something is being hidden from him. Ben is described as an average student, not into team sports and good looking. Jacob never hung around with the boy, saying that Ben was always too cool. A jogger was the first one to discover the body lying in Cold Spring Park. Ben had been stabbed in the chest three times. The only evidence was a single fingerprint on the inside of the boy’s sweatshirt.

Lieutenant Detective Paul Duffy, Barber’s friend, comes into this office. He has brought a folder of information on a local pedophile who is a suspect in the case. He came to the cops’ attention because he is accused of grabbing a teen boy’s genitals in a public library. Although Leonard Patz has never been violent and Rifkin showed no signs of sexual assault, Barber latches onto the suspect. The DA is uncomfortable with bringing Patz in, but they decide to because he did not register his address on the sexual offender registry. At a meeting with Lynn Canavan and Logiudice, Canavan indicates to Barber that she is uncomfortable with him taking the case since he is so close to it. Barber believes that Logiudice wants him off the case, so he will have the splashy case he needs to become DA. Logidice suggests that Barber is already not handling the case properly because no students have been interviewed. He also insinuates that Barber is avoiding the idea that a student might be involved in the murder.

Analysis

It is important to pay attention to Barber’s mindset through the novel. Since he is a prosecutor, he feels like he has a special ability to deal with the specifics of any crime. Gore and even the murder of one of his son’s classmates don’t seem to bother him.



Laurie seems to be much more emotionally concerned about the murder than her husband.

In this section, as Barber goes into Jacob's bedroom to wake him for the first day back to school since the murder, notice that he envisions Jacob as a baby. This manner of visualizing the boy makes him seem innocent and sweet, not the boy who is smiling as he sees the way that his school is surrounded by police. Barber interprets Jacob's smile as pleasure that his school's routine has been disrupted, but the smile may be viewed more than one way.

An important encounter the same day that the students go back to school is between Barber and Sarah, the girl who is being accused of wearing an inciteful sweatshirt. Although the police are trying to get her to dispose of the shirt, Barber talks the officer into letting her put it in her locker, then not wear it back to school again. Although it is a small thing, this encounter shows that Barber does have influence over the police.

A final thing to notice in this section of the novel is Barber's feelings from the beginning of the investigation that something is being hidden from him. He feels that it is because some thoughtful criminal has perpetrated the crime and is now watching to see if he'll be able to figure it out. He never takes into consideration that there could be other people who are hiding information from him. For instance, he notes that the DA, Lynn Canavan has become hard to read lately. There is also a meeting in which Logiudice, openly, and Canavan, more discretely, try to get Barber to sever himself from the case voluntarily. Barber interprets Logiudice's intentions as a plan for him to get a major case so he can make DA and refuses to let the case go. Notice also that Duffy dangles a suspect in front of Barber, but seems apprehensive to actually go after the man. Canavan also seems hesitant to do any active investigation of the "suspect."

Discussion Question 1

What do you think Logiudice's agenda is when he and Canavan talk to Barber to try to get him to step away from the case?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Leonard Patz is a legitimate suspect?

Discussion Question 3

Why is the encounter between Sarah, Barber and the police officer significant?



Vocabulary

Vintage, slippy, nostalgic, personas, ream, barnacled, conjure, nonconformity, tedium, implicit, confidante, cerebral, protocol, patronized, benevolence, crude, opportune, inciteful, impasse, adversary, entombed, particulate, plausible, tantalizing, faze, perimeter, inverted, lividity, projection, pristine, perfunctory, ostensibly, constituencies, gregarious, lewd, lascivious, pedophile, intuition, propositions, credible, charismatic, bureaucratic, integrity, competence



Part One: Chapters 5 – 6

Summary

In Chapter 5, “Everyone Knows You Did It,” Duffy and Barber are finally allowed to speak to Ben’s classmates, but find them not helpful. They both get the feeling that the students are hiding something from them. When Sarah Groehl is questioned, she seems uncomfortable, but will tell the detectives nothing. She asks about the tip line, then later emails Barber a link to a Facebook page called “Friends of Ben Rifkin.” As he reads the posts on the page, Barber begins to find several comments about Jacob, telling him to shut up and that his response is “not cool” because of a post that he put telling people to wake up because Ben was dead. He also points out that many of the people now mourning Ben were never his friends anyway.

Barber is surprised by the reactions the other students make to Jacob’s posts and wonders that he and Laurie never knew he was being treated this way. He suddenly feels as if Jacob needs protection from the other students. He decides to see what is on Jacob’s personal page. There, he finds a comment from one of Jacob’s friends that “Jake, everyone knows you did it. You have a knife. I’ve seen it.” The next morning when Barber is alone in the house, he searches Jacob’s room. He quickly finds a knife hidden in Jacob’s room. The 10-inch knife has a serrated blade and a hooked point.

In Chapter 6, “Descent,” Barber returns to the transcript of the grand jury investigation where Logiudice is questioning Barber about the knife. Barber admits that he hid the knife because he did not believe that it was the murder weapon. Logiudice asks Barber about his fear that Jacob would one day show violent tendencies because violence runs in the Barber family. Barber seems to have trouble answering Logiudice’s questions about his family’s violence and the suspected murder gene.

Moving from the transcript, Barber indicates that a violent streak has been traced back through three generations in his family. His great-grandfather changed his name from Burkett to Barber to thwart authorities. His rap sheet includes robbery, assault, rape and attempted murder. Barber’s grandfather went to war, where violence was celebrated, and brought his violent tendencies back to his domestic life. He uses a knife on a man after a minor traffic accident and is sentenced to jail on charges of assault with attempt to murder among others. His son, William, Andy Barber’s father, is serving a life sentence for rape and robbery in an incident of which Barber does not even know all of the details. He’d always told Laurie that he didn’t have a father, but never told her the truth about his ancestors.

Analysis

Landay throws out shocking information in this section of the novel as he has Sarah, one of Ben and Jacob’s classmates, draw Barber’s attention to Ben’s memorial page on



Facebook. It is interesting to note that while Barber is shocked about the way the students have responded to his son, he isn't disturbed by the unfeeling post that Jacob has put on the page. Also while perusing Jacob's personal page, Barber finds a comment put on the page by Derek Yoo, accusing Jacob of the crime. Derek insinuates that Jacob has a knife, a fact that Barber later verifies. Because Jacob is his son, Barber does not turn the knife over to authorities because he truly does not believe that Jacob has the ability to kill another person. When Logiudice questions Barber about the knife, it appears the questioning may be either about a tampering with evidence charge against Barber, or perhaps even Jacob's murder trial.

Logiudice's questioning also allows the author to drop another bombshell as it references the Barber family's history of violence. Logiudice seems to infer that this tendency to violence has been passed down through the male generations in Barber's family. When he asks Barber if he had feared the day that Jacob would turn violent, Barber does not answer. Barber seems to take the view that his ancestors' violence has nothing to do with him. He has had the ability to rise above his background, an act that he believes shows there is no hereditary determining factor in a person becoming violent. Notice, however, that he has never told Laurie about his family history. He was afraid, at first, that it would scare her away. Then there just did not seem to be an appropriate time.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the idea that violence is a tendency handed down from generation to generation.

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Barber did not turn in the knife he found in his son's room as a possible murder weapon?

Discussion Question 3

Knowing that the police can access information on Facebook for use in their cases, does this make you think twice before posting on a website? Should material on Facebook be used for this purpose?

Vocabulary

Anonymous, contentious, concede, stipulating, trawling, brazen, grandiose, vertiginous, subpoena, vapid, adversaries, maudlin, pixels, sinister, transcript, forensic, admissible, inaudible, lurid, sordid, feral, surmised, aptitude, mayhem, perfunctory, embroiled, affray, mediocre, precarious, credible, embellish, dematerialized, raffish, conception



Part One: Chapters 7 – 8

Summary

In Chapter 7, “Denial,” Barber admits he was becoming suspicious of Jacob, but believed only that the boy knew more than he was telling, not that he was guilty of the murder. When Barber and Laurie had confronted Jacob with the knife, the boy passed the weapon off as no big deal. He tells his parents that he got it because he thought it looked cool. Although Barber asks Jacob if he knew anything about the murder, Jacob responds by telling his father he can’t believe that he’d think he had committed a murder. He even tells his father he can submit it for testing.

That afternoon, Patz is being questioned at the Newton Police Station. He tells the officers that while he was walking in the park that morning, he didn’t go near the spot where Ben was killed. Barber insists them continue questioning the man even though the cops don’t seem to believe he was involved.

The novel switches back to the grand jury questioning with Barber admitting Patz was not questioned any more. In his line of questioning, Logiudice tries to get Barber to admit he focused on Patz too quickly as a suspect and didn’t want to – any others but Barber will not take the bait. The novel then reverts to the past with Patz’s lawyer showing up just in time to keep him from having to answer any more questions.

That night, Laurie accuses Barber of being prosecutorial when he spoke with Jacob. Laurie poses the question if they have a responsibility which Barber misinterprets as her asking if Jacob’s behavior is their fault. Laurie clarifies, asking if they need to turn the knife in for testing. Barber says no, and tells her that he has disposed of the knife in a Dumpster. When Barber asks Laurie if she agrees that it is ridiculous to think that Jacob killed Ben, Laurie responds that she can imagine the possibility, but draws back when her husband seems shocked. She reminds him that she could never have believed that Jacob would ever have a knife either.

In Chapter 8, “The End,” volunteers search Cold Spring Park for the knife that killed Ben. In a flash forward to the grand jury inquiry, Logiudice questions Barber about his lack of participation in the search. Barber says he didn’t help because he was prosecuting the case, not because he knew that Jacob had the knife that had killed Ben. Logiudice asks Barber about seeing Ben Rifkin’s father during the search, which causes the action of the story to flash back to the day of the search when Rifkin and Barber meet in the park.

Rifkin indicates to Barber he thinks all of the people around him are actors and accuses Barber of being an actor as well. Rifkin tells Barber that he wants a different DA to work the case. He questions Barber about how the case is being investigated including the lack of pushing when it came to questioning the kids, Jacob especially. He suggests Barber call his office. When Barber calls, Canavan asks him to come in so they can talk



in person. When he arrives, Canavan tells Barber that it was Jacob's fingerprint on Ben's sweatshirt. Barber is being put on paid leave. Loguidice will be taking over the case. Canavan tells Barber that Jacob will be arrested. Barber calls Laurie asking her to call him back. He also calls Jacob but gets no answer. At home, the cops are already there. Barber sneaks in the back way, rushing up to Jacob's room to see if there is anything else incriminating there.

When Laurie arrives, the search is already in full swing. She cries when she learns the news. One officer tells Barber that a knife was found in the park but that it was a regular kitchen knife. No one can find Jacob. Several hours later, he is located hiding in a play structure behind the elementary school. He does not fight his arrest. When his parents visit him, Jacob seems distraught that the authorities believe that he killed Ben.

It is that night that Barber decides he has to tell Laurie about the misdeeds of his ancestors. He is afraid the truth will come out anyway. He tries to convince her that his background has nothing to do with him or with Jacob.

Analysis

It is in the final chapter of this first part of the novel that Jacob is arrested for the murder of Ben Rifkin. Barber continues to insist that his son had nothing to do with the murder. He keeps this stance even one year later when Loguidice is questioning Barber about the knife that he disposed of without having tested. Something has happened that has brought knowledge of the knife to the attention of the prosecution. At this point it seems credible that Barber might be accused of tampering with evidence to cover up his son's crime.

Notice also the changed attitude of Rifkin when he meets Barker in the park the day volunteers are looking for the knife. When they'd met the day of the shiva Rifkin is open and blunt with Barber about his feelings. He seems to trust the man completely. It appears that Rifkin already knows something that has changed his feelings about Barber. It is when Barber calls his office, as Rifkin suggested, that he learns the one fingerprint has turned out to be Jacob's.

Even though he says that he still believes Jacob is innocent, he is sure to arrive home before the officers get there so he can search through Jacob's room. He claims he is doing this because he does not trust the system and is afraid that Jacob could go to jail on a technicality. Notice that when Loguidice is questioning Barber, however, Barber continually insists that he trust the law systems and hopes the truth will come out.

Notice also the author Landay has begun to use statements that build up a possibility, then turn back on themselves with the use of the word "but." For instance, the beginning of Chapter 7, Barber indicates that he has begun to suspect Jacob, which makes the reader believe that Barber is finally awakening to the obvious. However, he turns the idea around by completing the sentence with a statement that he does not suspect Jacob of murder. Jacob is just not telling everything that he knows.



Discussion Question 1

Why is Jacob's arrest a turning point in the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Why can Barber not prosecute Jacob's case?

Discussion Question 3

What should Barber have done with Jacob's knife? Why is it significant that he disposed of it?

Vocabulary

Scenario, menace, defiant, petulant, exclude, bohemian, affectation, quadrant, churlish, benign, valedictory, reverie, lingo, intrusion, latent, fallible, notoriously, voyeurs, sardonic, prelude



Part Two: Chapters 9 – 11

Summary

In Chapter 9, “Arraignment,” Jonathan Klein represents Jacob in the courtroom. Logiudice makes a point of telling the judge how much he admires Barber, but then tries to have a ridiculously high amount of bail assigned to the case. He also tries to get Klein thrown out as Jacob’s lawyer because of Klein’s affiliation with Patz, a suspect in the case at one time. The judge sets the bail at \$10,000 and approved Klein as Jacob’s lawyer. The case is assigned to Judge French for trial. When the family returns home, someone had written on their home in black paint accusing them of being hated murderers. Laurie spends the afternoon scrubbing the words off the wall.

In Chapter 10, “Leopards,” Barber, Laurie and Jacob meet with Klein in his office for the first time. It is during this visit that Laurie brings up the tendency for violence in the Barber family. Jacob is shocked that no one has told him about this before. Klein says that type of evidence would not be admissible but Jacob seems deeply upset that no one has ever told him about his background before. Barber indicates at this point it was as if his son had latched onto the idea of the murder gene being inside of him.

In Chapter 11, “Running,” Barber goes to Patz’s apartment complex, which is next to Cold Spring Park, one day after a run. He knows that Patz is responsible for Ben’s murder. Even Barber admits that his line of reasoning was illogical at the time, but says that it did not appear so at the time because he was Jacob’s father.

Analysis

So far in the novel, it has really been difficult to get a grasp on whether Barber believes that his son could have been involved in any way in Ben’s murder. It is at the end of Chapter 11 that Barber makes the first indication that he did not suspect Jacob and wanted to find someone else to be responsible because he was Jacob’s father. This indicates that there was some doubt rattling around in the back of Barber’s mind in respect to his son’s innocence.

Also interesting to note in this section of chapters is Jacob’s reaction to learning that there is a possibility that he has some genetic tendency toward violence. When he tries to explain to his dad he is upset by the knowledge because that is who he is, Barber does not understand why it is so important to the boy. Deep down inside, this knowledge may satisfy some struggle the boy has had with violent urges and tendencies. It is unsure if Jacob is comforted or upset by the knowledge he may have a genetic leaning toward a violent nature.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Jacob is so upset to learn that the men in his family have a genetic tendency toward violence?

Discussion Question 2

How appropriate do you think Klein's cello reference is?

Discussion Question 3

If you were Laurie, would you have brought up the violence in the Barber family? Do you think it is significant to the case?

Vocabulary

Equitability, restitution, ensue, catechism, contrite, etiquette, delusion, cajoling, dapper, heinous, embellishment, extemporaneous, unctuous, gauntlet, cordon, enunciated, expletive, meticulously, cavernous, druid, surreal, belligerent, verbatim, epiphany, fraught, circumstantial, contemptible, subversive, metaphor, oxymoronic, embodiment, illogic



Part Two: Chapters 12 – 14

Summary

In Chapter 12, “Confessions,” it is Klein’s suggestion to have the family see a psychiatrist to determine competency and criminal responsibility. Barber learns the particular doctor he chooses is an expert in genetic inheritance and its influence on behavior. In their meetings with Dr. Vogel, Barber indicates that his wife talked too much about Jacob. Barber believes she wanted to help Jacob so badly that she almost allowed him to be hung. She tells the woman that even from the time he was a baby Jacob would demonstrate “scary” moods by a different type of crawl. She also admits that other children were always getting hurt around Jacob. Barber reminds Laurie that Jacob grew out of all of these things when he got older, but Laurie is still convinced that something is wrong with him. Laurie also tells Dr. Vogel that as Jacob got older, kids stopped getting hurt around him but that he began stealing. When Barber continues to protest these accusations, Laurie tells Dr. Vogel that he is not realistic in his view of Jacob. Laurie insists that she does not believe that Jacob is capable of killing, but says that she does believe that he needs help.

Dr. Vogel points out a note in the file indicating that Jacob punched a hole in his bedroom wall, just last fall. Barber admits that reaction is not normal, but again claims that he does not have a blind side when it comes to Jacob’s violence. Dr. Vogel sees the discussion is becoming too heated and changes the subject by asking both parents how they see Jacob in ten years. Laurie admits she doesn’t know how things can turn out happily for Jacob. She indicates she just hopes that he is okay. Barber, however, says that he sees his son happy with a wife and children of his own. He admits that he feels Jacob needs to steel himself for what will happen in his life.

In Chapter 13, “179 Days,” the Barbers begin their countdown to the trial. They are eating dinner together one night, a ritual that Jacob calls fake, when his mother answers the phone. It is a prank caller. The call upsets Laurie to the point she won’t talk about it and is unable to finish her dinner.

In Chapter 14, “Questioning,” Klein questions Jacob about the knife. Andy admits that he got rid of it. Jacob says that he did not have the knife with him the day of Ben’s murder and that he had only been trying to help when he approached the boy. Jacob admits he didn’t call for help, even after he discovered Ben was dead. Jacob said he was panicking, but not showing it. For this reason, no one at school noticed what he was going through. From his story, both Klein and Barber decide that Jacob should not be called as a witness. Barber asks about bringing Patz into the story but Klein tells him there is nothing there. Jonathan suggests they spend their time dealing with the evidence already there instead of trying to bring new evidence into the case.



Analysis

These chapters basically deal with Klein's attempts to gather knowledge about Jacob, his family, and his case. They decide that Jacob's story is too full of holes to allow him to be put on the witness stand. In fact, after telling his story and noting Klein's trouble with it, Jacob accuses the lawyer of thinking that he was lying. Barber admits to himself that this is a common tactic on the part of a guilty person to try to get their accuser to say they believe they are lying. For this reason, Jacob does appear to be guilty.

Notice also the dynamics of the conversation between Laurie, Barber, and Dr. Vogel. Laurie seems to be prepared to accept that there is something emotionally or mentally wrong with her son. She is ready to take action to help her son. Barber, however, will not admit that there is anything wrong with Jacob. He insists that the boy is no different and never has been any different from any other rambunctious boy. Laurie stresses to Dr. Vogel that Barber is not thinking rationally about Jacob's behavior. Her insinuation is that he is blinded by the fact that Jacob is his son. Barber, however, indicates that it is Laurie who has hurt Jacob's case by giving out too much information about Jacob's background. It seems that Laurie is interested in helping Jacob while Barber is just interested in keeping the status quo.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast Laurie and Barber's opinions of Jacob. Which one of his parents do you believe is more realistic?

Discussion Question 2

Think about Jacob's statement of his activities the day of the crime. Do you believe what he has to say? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

At this point in the novel, do you believe that Jacob is guilty? Defend your answer.

Vocabulary

Bogus, avid, extracting, ethereally, rambunctious, treacherous, melancholy, parsed, narcissism, flummoxed, unabashed, intrusive, archaic, assiduously, rudiments, inquisitor



Part Two: Chapters 15 – 17

Summary

In Chapter 15, “Playing Detective,” Barber approaches Sarah Groehl at a Starbucks. He asks her why she sent him the Facebook address. Sarah will not even admit she is the one who sent the page at first, but tells him that she felt he needed to know what was being said. She also tells him that Ben had been bullying Jacob for sometime, saying that he was gay and a loser. She tells Barber that he really needs to talk to Derek Yoo because Derek seems to be Ben’s closest friend. Before they separate, Sarah tells Barber he is a good dad, and speculates that he must have had a good dad or other father figure in his life. Barber tries to go talk to Derek as Sarah suggested, but his parents will not let Barber in the house. Derek’s dad warns Barber not to come back.

In Chapter 16, “Witness,” Barber goes to visit Matthew Magrath, the boy who accused Patz of molesting him. The Magraths seem to have been expecting someone to come and talk to them about Patz. Matthew tells Barber that Jacob didn’t kill Ben, that it was Patz who did it. Matthew admits that Patz never groped him in the library, that he turned the man in because Patz stopped paying Matthew for allowing him to touch his bottom and genitalia through his clothes. He says Patz dropped him because he had his eye on another boy who walked to school through Cold Spring Park. Matthew tells him that the day Patz decided to approach Ben in the park, he had a knife with teeth with him. Matthew tells Barber he hadn’t told anyone any of this before because he figured no one would believe him.

In Chapter 17, “Nothing’s Wrong With Me!,” Barber checks Jacob’s online accounts each morning to make sure the boy isn’t putting anything that might be incriminating on his new Facebook page. In mid-August, Jacob slips up and puts a photo of Norman Bates with Jacob’s face Photoshopped onto it. Although Jacob claims the photo is just a joke, Barber tries to make him understand how it might make him look to others. He tells Derek that even if they delete the photo, the DA will still be able to get it if someone mentions it to him. Laurie chides Barber for yelling at Jacob then goes back to bed. Before he leaves Jacob’s room, Jacob tells his father there is nothing wrong with him, but that he knows what will happen to him.

Analysis

In the first two chapters of this section of the novel, Barber tries to do a little independent investigation of his son’s case. He is able to get nothing from Derek and little from Sarah but Matthew Magrath confirms Barber’s suspicion that it was Patz who murdered Ben. Patz even tells Barber that Patz had a knife that he kept with him. However, Magrath also has a history and is currently on probation. Barber knows that no jury will believe Magrath’s testimony.



In the final chapter in this section, the Barber family tries to make it through ordinary life until the trial is finished. Barber monitors the Facebook page that Jacob opened under an alias to make sure the boy doesn't post anything that might be incriminating. When he does put a picture of himself as Norman Bates, Barber is furious. He tries to explain to Jacob how stupid it was for him to post the photo. Jacob appears to not understand how much trouble he is in until his father turns to leave the room. It is at this point that he tells his father he knows what is about to happen to him.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it so detrimental that Jacob posted the photo of his face pasted on the body of Norman Bates?

Discussion Question 2

If you were Jacob's parents, would you allow him to have Internet at all at this point? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Barber think that he cannot use Matthew Magrath's testimony in Jacob's trial?

Vocabulary

Canting, etiquette, infamy, paranoid, permissive, imploring, detumescent, cryptic, posh, ventured, vampy, conspiratorial, torque, extorted, integral, misconstrued, reincarnation, transcript, futuristic



Part Two: Chapters 18 – 20

Summary

In Chapter 18, “The Murder Gene, Redux,” Dr. Vogel brings up the idea of a murder gene again during their next meeting. She needs DNA evidence because Klein might want to introduce that evidence as mitigation. Barber is offended by the suggestion but agrees to the test if it will help keep Jacob out of prison. Dr. Vogel tells him they also need to test Barber’s father but that he has refused to do so unless he is asked by Barber. Although Barber wants Dr. Vogel to tell his father to get lost, Dr. Vogel argues that they need the man’s help. If they get a court order, the DA will know what they are doing so the best thing to do is for Barber to ask for the DNA himself.

In Chapter 19, “The Cutting Room,” Barber walks uninvited into the Yoos’ house. Although Derek is scared, Barber convinces him to talk to him about Jacob. Derek tells him that Ben had been picking on Jacob because Ben just didn’t like him. He says that Jacob got the knife because he was afraid of Ben. Derek also tells Barber about the cutter porn that Jacob reads on the Internet and refers him to the site “Cutting Room.” When Barber says this isn’t possible, Derek says Jacob had been using his iPod to access the site so his father wouldn’t find out.

Derek tells Barber about Jacob laughing at a kid on crutches one day even though others told him it was not the thing to do. He also tells about a dog that Jacob had found and buried alive. Derek says his friendship with Jacob is not what it had once been. He admits to Barber he had always figured Jacob would get into trouble one day.

Back at home Barber uses Jacob’s iPod to find the Cutting Room. He locates a story about the murder of a boy in a park that Jacob had saved to the site on April 19. Although Barber recognizes the story as a description of Ben’s murder, he doesn’t consider it a confession. He notices there is nothing in the story that isn’t nonpublic information. He isn’t even sure that Jacob wrote the story. He clears the story from the iPod’s memory and puts it back on Jacob’s dresser. On second thought, Barber takes the iPod downstairs to his worktable and smashes it with a hammer.

In Chapter 20, Barber indicates his family went to the grocery store Whole Foods for groceries even though the store is ridiculously expensive. At the cash register, they come face to face with Joan and Dan Rifkin. Laurie tries to reach out to them but Joan spits in her face and calls them murderers. Barber guides his wife and son to the car. They leave without their groceries.

Analysis

Even though evidence against Jacob is mounting, Barber still does not believe that his son is capable of murder. He blindly destroys the iPod from which Jacob sent the story about a boy killed in a park. While the story closely parallels a description of Ben’s



murder, Barber reasons that it is not a confession because it does not include any information that had not already been made public. Andy is also angry and defensive when the psychiatrist tells him they need to look into his background and check for a piece of DNA informally referred to as “the murder gene.” Barber makes it clear that he doesn’t want anything to do with his father. He is only agreeing to go ask for the DNA because it will possibly help save his son from a death sentence.

At this point in the novel, Barber has begun his own investigation and seems to be getting more and more careless. He walks into the Voo’s house even though Derek’s parents have requested that he not come back. He also questions Voo even though he knows that it is against generally accepted practice. His desperation to find out what Voo might have said to the prosecution seems to show that although Barber claims that he believes his son is innocent, he harbors some doubt in his mind. He tries to blame his over vigilance on a lack of trust in the legal system, but is, at the same time, destroying items that might be evidence in a murder. As the story plays out, it becomes more and more viable that Barber is being questioned by the grand jury on some sort of obstruction of justice charge.

Discussion Question 1

At this point in the novel, do you think that Jacob is guilty of the murder of Ben? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

If Barber believes that his son is innocent, why is he trying to hard to cover Jacob’s tracks?

Discussion Question 3

What is significant about the interaction between the Barbers and Rifkins in the grocery store?

Vocabulary

Redux, impassive, exclude, mitigation, taxonomy, tactical, mandatory, discretion, predisposition, predestination, distort, sensationalize, relenting, facilities, intransigence, sadism, immaculate, ludicrous, leveraged, ruinously, competent, enigma, vivacious, palpable, banality, genteel, deluge



Part Two: Chapters 21 – 23

Summary

In Chapter 21, “Beware the Fury of a Patient Man,” Barber continues to focus on Patz, becoming more convinced he is the murderer the more he watches him. He trails Patz, hoping the man will make a mistake. One afternoon, Barber follows Patz in traffic, bumping his car from behind twice. When Patz gets out of his car, Barber confronts him, accusing him of the murder of Ben Rifkin. Patz claims not to have had any part in Ben’s murder even though Barber continues to accuse him.

The story switches forward to Barber’s questioning by Logiudice. Barber accuses Logiudice of burying evidence by not bringing the jury’s attention to the fact that Patz was a suspect. Barber challenges Logiudice to tell the jury how he knew Patz, but Logiudice will not humor him and suggests that they move along.

In Chapter 22, “A Heart Two Sizes Too Small,” the narrative continues with Barber’s grand jury testimony. Logiudice brings into evidence a letter from Dr. Vogel to the Barbers. The letter describes Dr. Vogel’s findings concerning Jacob’s mental health. Logiudice makes him read the portion of Dr. Vogel’s letter where the doctor indicates that Jacob’s heart is “two sizes too small” in respect to his empathy, cruelty and impulse control. Logiudice seems determined that Barber could not have lived with Jacob all these years and not noticed any problems with Jacob. Barber believes that he has some sort of confirmation bias that has kept him from seeing the truth about Jacob. It is this point that Logiudice brings up Barber’s lack of truthfulness about his family’s background.

In Chapter 23, “Him,” Barber details his visit with his father at Northern Correctional Institution. His father is both confrontational because Barber has not been to see him and interested in learning about his son’s life. He tries to get his father to talk to him about what he was feeling when he killed the girl, but the father will do nothing but parrot what he believes Barber wants to hear. He does, however, give Barber a DNA sample.

Analysis

Significant in this section of the novel is the interaction between Barber and his father. Both seem to be determined to prove to the other that they don’t require or desire the other’s acceptance. They both have to give a little as Barber must ask his father to submit to a DNA test. His father must submit to the test, a sign that he has some concern for his son and the grandson that he never met.

A term introduced in this section of the novel is that of confirmation bias. Barber tells Logiudice that he believes that he was around Jacob so much that he did not recognize that there was anything unusual about his behavior even though Logiudice cannot



fathom how Barber wouldn't have noticed. In confirmation bias, a person will seek out any information that confirms the opinion that they have of a person, particularly one to whom they are close. At the same time, this person will unconsciously ignore information that does not support the opinion they want to have.

Discussion Question 1

Do you believe it is the confirmation bias that has blinded Barber against his son's actions or is he lying?

Discussion Question 2

Describe your impression of Barber's father.

Discussion Question 3

What is Logiudice trying to do when he stresses the results of Jacob's mental evaluation to the point of upsetting Barber? Does he get what he wants?

Vocabulary

Mercenaries, accentuated, exculpatory, articulate, reticent, hauteur, divergence, contingent, ramifying, intricate, volatility

Part Three: Chapters 24 – 26

Summary

It is empty and Barber gets a license number off the plate. Barber notifies Duffy about the car and has him run the license number. Duffy agrees to drive by the house and see if he can scare the person off so there will be no police report taken.

Analysis

With Part 3 of the novel, Jacob's trial begins. Note Barber's foreshadowing that he has never considered the possibility that they will lose in court. This seems to be building up to a losing of the case with the remainder of the novel dealing with the fallout of Jacob's guilty verdict. Klein immediately convinces the judge to keep any genetic tendencies to violence in Barber's family out of the trial. Even when Logiudice is still presenting against the motion, the judge rules that no mention of genetics will be brought into the trial. This quick and definite answer on the judge's part makes it seem as if he does not like Logiudice, a sentiment that might help the Barbers.

Also interesting in this section of the novel is the car that begins casing the Barbers' neighborhood. The family first notices it when they are at home after the first day of Jacob's trial. They believe that whoever is in the car means to do them harm. Jacob suggests that it might be a reporter. To keep from having an incident report filed, Barber has his friend, Duffy, drive past the house to see if he can scare the man away.

Another point to consider is the tormented cat howling in the night before Jacob's trial began. Although no connections are even made, it is possible that Jacob found an animal to torment the night before his trial as a way of blowing off some steam. As his parents listen to the cat, they seem to agree that if it were an animal killing it out of anger or hunger, it wouldn't be as tormented as it sounded. Remember that according to Derek, Jacob had a history of abusing animals as well as people.

Discussion Question 1

Who do you think is driving the car that is casing the Barber's house?

Discussion Question 2

Does the idea of the tormented cat that Barber and his wife hear the night before the trial lead to any suspicions? What are they?



Discussion Question 3

How competent do you think any jury is to determine the guilt or innocence of a defendant? Is the jury a weakness in the justice system?

Vocabulary

Euphoria, pugnacious, efflorescence, gauntlet, ostensibly, egomaniacal, contentious, bombastic, embodiment, tyrant, rogue, credulous, austerity, peremptory, biased, perverse, expound, keel, blithely, laconic



Part Three: Chapters 27 - 29

Summary

In Chapter 27, "Openings," Barber watches as Logiudice uses the trial techniques that Barber had taught him. He argues that Jacob snapped when Ben pushed him too far as he teased him. Logiudice reasons that since Jacob's father was a district attorney, he knew how to commit the murder so he would not get caught. Logiudice finds himself caught in a trap of his own making as he tries to argue the why of the murder since he first said that Jacob had acted out of sudden rage, then also said that the murder was planned. Barber realizes that the jury knows he can't have it both ways. Klein, whom Barber believes is the more likeable lawyer, argues that Ben's death was a horrible tragedy but that by finding Jacob guilty, the jury will be causing another tragedy.

Paula Giannetto, the woman who found the body, is the first to testify. With the next witness, Barber indicates that Logiudice makes a major mistake. He brings Andy Barber's professionalism as a defense attorney into question by indicating that he does not believe that Barber should ever have been involved in the case. Klein, however, puts the question to rest when he asks the detective on the stand about Barber's role in the investigation. The detective tells the jury with no reservation that Barber was the best assistant DA they had.

In Chapter 28, "A Verdict," Dr. Vogel tells the Barber family the results of Jacob's mental evaluation after that day's court session. He has tested as having narcissistic personality disorder and reactive attachment disorder. The narcissism makes Jacob lack empathy for others. He also believes that he is special and somehow above the rules. She tells the Barbers that these habits of thought for Jacob can be unlearned and that she is more disturbed by the diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder. As she explains the possible causes, Laurie immediately believes that Jacob's problems are her fault because she sent him to daycare so that she could work. When Barber argues against the findings, Laurie accuses him of not seeing what was happening before him.

Laurie angrily demands that Dr. Vogel to tell her about the gene she'd been looking for in the DNA testing. Dr. Vogel admits to her that Jacob, his father, and his grandfather all have the gene. She also indicates to Laurie that Jacob has the emotional maturity of a seven year old. Laurie demands to know what she can do to help Jacob.

In Chapter 29, "The Burning Monk," Jacob busies himself by pulling skin off his fingers during the third day of the trial. A woman, Ruthann, is on the stand testifying that she saw Jacob near the murder scene. Even as the witness' testimony falls apart on the stand, Barber suddenly gets the feeling that the trial really doesn't matter. He realizes that it was Dr. Vogel's findings that were of most significance for himself and Laurie. He feels like Jacob has already received a guilty verdict in this respect. At the end of the day's testimony, Barber indicates that he feels the defense is way ahead of the prosecution. He also notes that this was their last good day in the trial.



The end of this chapter switches back to the grand jury investigation where Logiudice questions Barber about how badly the trial upset Laurie. Logiudice indicates that after talking with Dr. Vogel, Laurie had her doubts about Jacob's innocence. Even though Logiudice pushes Barber, he indicates that he never doubted Jacob's innocence.

Analysis

Significant to this section is the continued antagonism between Barber and Logiudice. Logiudice seems almost more interested in finding guilt in Barber's action and drawing to the court's attention how bad a move he believed it was for Barber to ever be involved in the investigation of the murder. During the questioning, the judge mentions to Logiudice that if he thinks that Barber should be on trial, he should indict him. Logiudice gives Barber a look as if he plans to do just that.

Barber's narration of the trial and his opinion of the progress being made seem unusually misleading. At one point he says that he cannot imagine them losing, yet a black cloud of doom seems to be hanging over his narrative. Even as Logiudice's witness is in the process of nearly recanting her testimony on the stand, which is good for the defense, Barber notes that he can suddenly think of nothing but the information that Dr. Vogel had given them about the results of Jacob's mental evaluation. Laurie had grown defensive believing she was somehow responsible for the way Jacob had turned out, then desperate to find some way to help her son. Barber feels that even if Jacob is found not guilty in the trial, Dr. Vogel's diagnosis is the only verdict that will really matter to their family.

Notice also in this section of the novel that Laurie accuses her husband of not seeing the truth in Jacob. She says that from the beginning, he has only seen what he wanted to see. Meanwhile, Laurie is able to look back to the roots of the boy's troublemaking and realizes that Ben's murder is more than an isolated event if this murder were Jacob's doing. During the trial, Barber has been focusing on getting Jacob's charges dismissed, he has indicated several times that his intent is to save Jacob now and fix Laurie later. As they sit in Dr. Vogel's office and the courtroom, Barber realizes how much the stress of Jacob's murder charge has weighed on Laurie and aged her. He blames this process on her having had no experiences in her life to harden her against the bad times. Notice also Barber's mention that he still loved Laurie, even at that point in their lives. Looking back at the experience from nearly a year after the trial, Barber says that he still loves Laurie. His statement seems to insinuate that Laurie might have done something that others would think would make Barber love her less.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Barber should have recused himself from Ben's murder investigation from the beginning? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Why might Dr. Vogel's findings on Jacob's mental evaluation been more disturbing to the family than a murder conviction?

Discussion Question 3

What is your interpretation of the changes in Laurie? Do you think that Barber is missing things that he should be noticing?

Vocabulary

Meticulously, preen, balefully, distill, contemptible, shirked, imploring, spontaneity, pathos, ludicrously, desultory, rendition, antagonism, emoting, poignant, candidly, comorbidity, grandiosity, mollified, atypical, demurred, protrusion, improvised, droll



Part Three: Chapter 30

Summary

In Chapter 30, "The Third Rail," Jacob's trial continues into the fourth day. Barber's friend, Paul Duffy, is on the stand. Logiudice questions Duffy about Barber's involvement in the case and if he had pursued or avoided any suspects. Barber is surprised to learn that some of the investigation was carried out without his knowledge. Duffy testifies what Derek Yoo told the police during their investigation about Jacob's knife, his plan to use it to defend himself if Ben bullied him again, and Jacob's story as published on the Cutting Room. He claims the knife angle was described in the story, something that was not included in the public records of the murder. Duffy also tells the jury that there was a knife found in a pond on park grounds but it did not match Ben's wounds. He suspected that knife had been planted there to throw off investigators.

On cross-examination, Duffy says that Jacob had been in his seat at school with no blood on him just a few minutes after Ben's murder. Klein also asks about Logiudice's pushing to have Patz removed as a suspect. On his cross-examination, Logiudice missteps as he asks Duffy when he learned that Barber's father was a murderer. The judge is furious as he calls for the lawyers at his side rail. He chastises Logiudice for overstepping the rules and orders the jury to disregard Logiudice's comment. Klein indicates that he wants to file for a mistrial. Klein adds that if no mistrial is called, he wants to add Patz and Billy Barber as witnesses.

At this point, the narrative switches to the transcription of the grand jury investigation. Barber tells Logiudice that he'd known from the beginning that it had been Laurie who had planted the knife in the pond at Cold Spring Park. He said Laurie had planted the knife before talking to him and had thrown out the wrong type.

Back in real time, the Barber's find a threatening note on their car when they leave the courthouse. Klein takes it, saying he will take care of it. Barber notices a man whom he believes might be the same as the one who he saw in the Lincoln Town Car and wonders if he is the one who left the note.

Analysis

Logiudice continues to point a finger at Barber for improper conduct during his line of questioning. He seems to be attempting to prove that Barber was somehow trying to cover for his son's actions by acting as the district attorney for the case. He also tries to get Duffy to admit that Barber "pushed" investigating Patz but intentionally held back on questioning the school children. Duffy does not allow himself to get backed into this corner. Logiudice makes a major mistake when he questions Duffy about when he learned that Barber's father was a murderer.



Discussion Question 1

What is your opinion of Barber's opinion of his wife planting the knife?

Discussion Question 2

What is your opinion of Logiudice as a lawyer?

Discussion Question 3

What is your opinion of Klein as a lawyer?

Vocabulary

Tentative, recalibration, levitated, ascertain, corroborate, hypothetically, pare, exasperation, sequestration, volatile, prejudicial



Part Three: Chapters 31 – 33

Summary

In Chapter 31, “Hanging Up,” Barber receives a collect call from his father just as the family is finishing dinner. His father asks how the trial is going. He tells Barber that he heard his name came up in court. Although Andy Barber tells his father the trial is none of his business, Billy Barber argues that the possibility of being used as a witness makes it his business. Billy Barber asks about Patz, and Andy Barber tells him that Patz is the person whom he believes killed Ben. Billy Barber asks Andy Barber to make sure and keep his grandson out of jail. Andy Barber hangs up on his father. Laurie and Jacob have been listening to the call. They agree that next time Billy Barber calls, whoever answers is to hang up on him.

In Chapter 32, “The Absence of Evidence,” the trial is in its fifth day. Judge French denies Klein’s motion for a mistrial. The next person to testify is a criminalist. She testifies to the position of the body and blood spatter evidence. She also testifies about the fingerprint found on Ben’s sweatshirt. In order for him to leave the fingerprint, the witness says that Jacob would have to have touched the body within 15 minutes of the murder.

Later in the trial, Logiudice tries to enter a Spyderco Civilian knife into evidence, the type of knife that Jacob mentions in his story. The judge will not allow it. Klein makes sure to point out in his cross-examination of the criminalist that the fingerprint is the only evidence the state has against Jacob. He also makes sure to point out that the only thing connecting Jacob to the knife that Logiudice tried to present as evidence is the testimony of Derek Yoo, another teenager.

In Chapter 33, “Father O’Leary,” Barber reports that he feels the case is close. Barber and Jacob are positive, but Laurie is afraid the closeness will make the jury feel they have to convict. That evening, the family members agree to stop talking about the trial. Laurie goes to bed. While Jacob and Barber are watching television Jacob tells his father that the strange car is back. Jacob asks if they should call the police but Barber goes to the closet for a bat. As he heads out the front door, a police cruiser intercepts him.

Duffy tells Barber to go back in the house. He checks the man’s license and registration and then tells him to move on and not come back. Duffy takes the bat from Barber and says they need to talk. Duffy tells Barber the man who has been hanging around is an old gangster. Now he can be hired out as a fixer. They wonder who is paying him and what they have against Jacob or the family. Duffy also tells Barber that he’s found a connection between Patz and Logiudice. It appears that there had been a rape case against Patz that Logiudice had worked down to indecent assault and battery and pleaded Patz out. Even though Barber tells Duffy he doesn’t want him to keep watch



over their house that night, he notices the police cruiser still parked outside about 20 minutes later.

Analysis

Barber learns that an old hit man has apparently been hired to watch his family. It appears that the man means to harm them in some way. Duffy runs the man off and keeps watch over the Barber's home. Notice that although Klein did not seem concerned about the man that Barber said was watching them as they left the courthouse one day, he was apparently paying more attention than he put on as he was the one who tipped Duffy off about the man being trouble.

Barber also receives a strange phone call from his father one day after the trial, the same day that they notice the strange man in the parking garage. He wants to know how the trial is going and if Jacob is going to get off. He tells his son that he doesn't want his grandson in jail as he is. He strongly suggests to Andy Barber that he do whatever he needs to do to get Jacob a not guilty verdict. Barber suggests to his father that he come and make sure that Jacob doesn't get put in jail since he is suddenly so interested in a grandchild that he has never known. Andy Barber doesn't realize it at the time, but he could have been issuing a challenge to his father.

New information about Patz muddies the water even more. It appears that Patz had once been accused of rape, and, for some reason, Patz is able to plead down to a charge of indecent assault and battery. Logiudice was the prosecutor in the case. Duffy is unsure if anything unusual happened in the case that Logiudice is trying to cover up by trying to draw attention away from Patz. The knowledge that Patz had once been accused of a violent crime makes it more possible that he was responsible for Ben's murder, just as Matthew Magrath said he was.

Discussion Question 1

At this point, who do you think is guilty of Ben's murder? Jacob or Patz? Give reasons to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Review Andy Barber's talk on the phone with his father. Why do you think Billy Barber called his son? What did he want? Does he really care about them?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe that Father O'Leary is watching the Barbers? Do you think he means them harm?



Vocabulary

Curative, trajectory, stipulate, vehemently, gallantly, truce, nuances, brazenly, concede, nonchalance



Part Three: Chapters 34 – 36

Summary

In Chapter 34, “Jacob was Mad,” Derek is one of the witnesses in the sixth day of Jacob’s trial. Derek testifies that before school that day Jacob had a big spot on his hand that looked like blood. He says that Jacob had just kind of smiled when the students were told the school had been placed on lock down. After they learned that Ben had been killed, Derek says he texted Jacob who said he didn’t see anything in the park that morning. He also testifies that Jacob had been having trouble with Ben bullying him for some time. Derek testifies that Jacob had a temper and would often get mad about things. He also tells the jury that Jacob did have a knife with teeth. He also tells about the story that Jacob posted in the Cutting Room that described Ben’s murder.

After Derek’s testimony, Barber feels as if there is a charge in the room. He feels that the judge and jury have used Derek’s testimony to decide that Jacob is guilty. Even though Klein does well in his cross examination and shaves away at Derek’s testimony, Barber wonders what it will be like to visit his son in jail.

In Chapter 35, “Argentina,” the Barber family fanaticizes what it would be like for them to escape Jacob’s murder charge to a place like Argentina. Later that night when Laurie and Barber are in bed Laurie admits that she isn’t sure if Jacob is innocent. She asks what happens if Jacob gets off but is guilty and then kills again. She indicates she feels they would have some responsibility in allowing him to kill.

A few hours later, they hear a siren. Barber looks out the window but can’t see anything. He doesn’t realize that the siren indicates that everything has changed for them.

In Chapter 36, “Helluva Show,” Barber gets a phone call telling him that Patz has written a confession letter and has killed himself. Patz killed himself in response to a subpoena issued by Klein. As soon as the court opens, the charges against Jacob will be dismissed. Barber reasons that this outcome is better than a not guilty verdict by the jury as it proves someone else committed the crime.

Once they are out of court, the Barbers stand by their car talking to Klein. Dan Rifkin walks up to the family, wearing a trench coat. Father O’Leary is walking behind him. Rifkin pulls a knife from a pocket of his coat but before he can reach the Barbers, O’Leary grabs him and knocks the knife out of his hand. Barber finally asks O’Leary who he is and learns that he is a friend of Billy Barber. He lets Rifkin go when Barber tells him to do so, then shakes Jacob’s hand. He talks to Barber for a minute and then walks away. The family never sees him again.



Analysis

It seems like this would be an appropriate place for the book to end, but there is one more part. Surprisingly, Jacob is found innocent, thanks to the timely confession of another man who was once a suspect in the murder. The trial has put enough doubt in Laurie's mind about her son's innocence that she is divided about whether or not she will be happy with a verdict of not guilty. She is afraid that if Jacob is actually guilty of the crime, and goes out and kills again, they will be responsible for the second murder. Although she tries to talk to Barber about her feelings of responsibility he can't, or won't try to understand where she is going. He still cannot fathom his son as a killer, much less them being responsible for any subsequent murders.

Father O'Leary's role in the novel is finally discovered. He is acting as a friend of Barber's father. He evidently has been sitting outside the Barber's house not because he has been trying to harm them, but because Billy Barber has sent him to keep an eye on the family. This is why the man asks Barber about his family the night that Duffy runs him off. When Dan Rifkin approaches the family with a knife, O'Leary gets the knife away before anyone is hurt. When speaking with O'Leary, it is the first time that Barber has acknowledged his father in public.

Discussion Question 1

In this story, what is the difference between the truth and the verdict, as Laurie tries to explain to her husband?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think there is anything unusual about Patz's confession and suicide? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

What is Father O'Leary's role in the novel?

Vocabulary

Ostensibly, morose, idiocies, extradition, infuriating, platitudes, indulgent, surety, epaulattes, fathom, sublime, impotence



Part Four: Chapters 37 – 40

Summary

In Chapter 37, “After-life,” Barber describes the family’s loneliness after Jacob’s vindication. They think about moving away to a place where they can start over. Although they don’t necessarily think Jacob is guilty, they are disturbed by what they have heard about him. Some even think the trial’s abrupt ending was strange. Jacob continues to be homeschooled. Barber is still on paid leave. He wonders how Canavan will handle the situation since she supported Logiudice, which turned out to be the wrong choice. He wonders what career options are open for him, if any. Laurie is guarded in the days after the trial, which Barber believes is understandable. He believes that what she has been through has hardened her.

In Chapter 38, “The Policeman’s Dilemma,” Andy Barber meets his father at the jail and asks his father why he had Patz killed. Barber describes what he is feeling with his father as the “policeman’s dilemma” he knows his father is guilty, but can’t prove his guilt. Barber tells his father that it had taken him awhile to figure out what had happened but had finally put the clues together. Barber tells his father that because he did not let a jury find Jacob not guilty, there will always be doubt. Billy Barber reminds his son that he does bring the “wrongful” death of Patz to the attention of the authorities, he will only be hurting himself and Jacob.

The narrative forwards to Barber’s grand jury inquisition when Logiudice is questioning him about Patz’ death. In response to Logiudice’s questions, Barber says that he has no idea of what happened to Patz. He also denies knowing O’Leary. Thinking about the inquisition from the future, Barber thinks about how he wanted to pat Logiudice on the back and tell him that all witnesses lie. It was soon after this inquisition that Logiudice resigned from the DA’s office soon after this grand jury session. He has taken a job as a defense lawyer; a position that Barber believes will get him disbarred.

In Chapter 39, “Paradise,” the Barber family decides to go away to a Jamaican resort named “Waves.” While there, Jacob befriends a girl who is also there on vacation. Things go well until Hope disappears.

In Chapter 40, “No Way Out,” Barber is still before the grand jury. Logiudice is asking what happened to Hope Connors. Although Barber contends it was a drowning, Logiudice references information indicating that her windpipe was crushed before she went into the water. Barber testifies that Jacob was concerned about Hope but that Laurie seemed to think that Jacob had something to do with her disappearance. Jacob had come up to them with spots that looked like blood or ketchup on his swim trunks the day of Hope’s disappearance. Barber had told him to get into the water to wash them off. He says that Jacob was questioned in Jamaica about Hope’s disappearance but was never arrested. Barber believes Jacob was innocent but Laurie had come to her own conclusions, which she did not talk to Barber about much. When Logiudice tries to



get Barber to hypothetically say what he might have done if he had thought Jacob was a murderer, Barber refuses to answer. It is at this point that Logiudice throws his note pad in frustration.

When Logiudice looks at Barber, Barber doubts that he can see the truth, that his wounds are worse than death, and that the law will not fix his pain. Logiudice reminds Barber they are investigating Laurie, not Jacob or Barber. Logiudice demands Barber say that he believes Laurie should be indicted, found guilty and locked up for what she did. He asks Barber for a recount of the events of March 19, 2008. Barber says that Duffy had come to the house and told him there had been a wreck. Jacob was dead. Laurie was banged up but would survive. Witnesses had seen Laurie speed up as she drove the minivan toward a bridge abutment. She did not try to swerve, and there were no other vehicles involved. Logiudice indicates that Laurie murdered Jacob, but it can still come out right. Barber doubts that it can.

As Barber leaves the courthouse that day, he thinks of what Jacob's last moments must have been like. Jacob was in the second row of seats in the van without his seat belt on. Laurie is crying as she moves into the right hand lane and takes off her seat belt. She picks up speed. Barber forecasts what Jacob might have been like had he grown up. Jacob questions why his mother is going so fast. She tells him only that she loves him. Barber imagines that his son thought of him and how much Barber loved Jacob as he saw the abutment coming toward him.

Analysis

While it seems the action of the book should be winding down, author Landay drops a bombshell in this last part of his novel. The reason why Barber has been testifying before the grand jury is finally revealed. Logiudice is trying to get Laurie indicted for murder for intentionally having a car wreck in which Jacob was killed. It is obvious that the case is thrown out since Barber indicates that he walks out of the courthouse at the end of his questioning and never returns.

Another shocking development is Barber's confrontation of his father concerning the real circumstances behind Patz's death. Barber believes that Patz's suicide was staged by O'Leary as a way to get Jacob off the hook. Even through all of the evidence against Jacob, Barber still believes that his son is innocent. He has completely blocked out of his belief any possibility that Jacob could be a murderer. Laurie, however, feels differently. She still loves Jacob, but sees the mounting evidence against him. She feels that it is her parental responsibility to keep Jacob from killing anyone else.

Perhaps the most shocking and damning development in this section of the novel is the questionable death of Jacob's girlfriend at the Jamaican resort. Evidence against Jacob includes the odd brownish spots on his swim trunks the day of Hope's death. Although it is believed that Hope drowned, there is also some evidence that her windpipe might have been crushed before she went into the water.



The reader is left with no direction by the author or narrator as to what they should believe about Jacob's guilt or innocence. One can believe, like Laurie, that the boy is guilty and be comforted that he is no longer in a position where he can be a danger to anyone. Or, one can believe like Barber that Jacob was not capable of murder. It appears, however, that blind belief is only possible for a father. He so much wants to believe that he has overcome the violent curse in his family that he cannot believe that Jacob would have embraced it. Laurie, who seems to have observed her son more closely than Barber, recognizes how badly he needs help. She also realizes that without the cooperation of her husband, there is nothing she can do on her own. By killing Jacob, she takes care of the problem in the only way that she knows how.

The ending of the novel is tainted with sorrow. Although he's tried so hard to separate himself from his father and that legacy, it has still come back to haunt him. He has lost his job, his reputation, his son and perhaps even his wife as his family has tried to deal with the possibility that Jacob has followed in his grandfather's footsteps. The only bit of revenge that Barber gets from the whole ordeal is that Logiudice has to resign from the DA's office because of the way he dealt with Jacob's case and the possibility that some information about Patz had been covered up or downplayed, keeping that man from being a more liable suspect in Ben's murder. Barber is pleased the lawyer is out of the job that he once believed would be his because Logiudice learned his court techniques from Barber, then used them against Barber in the most personal way.

Discussion Question 1

Do you believe Jacob is guilty of Ben's death? Of Hope's death? Give reasons to support your answers.

Discussion Question 2

Should Laurie have gone to jail for killing Jacob? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Which parent do you believe had the more realistic view of Jacob and his personality? Why do you believe this way?

Vocabulary

Exonerated, vindication, prosaic, interminable, myriad, equanimity, involutes, adjacent, tyrannical, connoisseur, trussed, insolent, perjury, disbarred, protégé, notorious, fraudulent, cerulean, deluding, pith, blancoed, nebulous, extroverted, subterfuge, furtively, primal, binary, saturnine, pedantic, reticent, patrimony



Characters

Andy Barber

Andy Barber is the main character and narrator of the novel. He serves as First Assistant to the District Attorney until his son is charged with murder in connection with the death of a schoolmate. Barber is the husband of Laurie Barber and the father of Jacob Barber. He is the son of Bloody Billy Barber, a man who is serving a life sentence for a murder. Barber has never told his son or his wife about his background of violence which includes his grandfather and great-grandfather. He has not told his wife about his father because he was afraid that she would not stay with him if she knew his background. After they were married, he reasoned that there was never a good time to tell her.

Throughout the course of the novel, Barber claims that he believes his son is innocent. He maintains his belief in his son even after he finds a knife that matches the murder weapon in Jacob's drawer and learns that Jacob had a beef with Ben. Barber disposes of the knife, claiming that he did so because he did not believe that Jacob committed the crime. Barber also destroys his son's iPod after he discovers the link to the Cutting Room and the story that seems to describe Ben's murder. Even after Hope's strange disappearance in Jamaica, Barber still denies that he believes that his son has an unusual history of people turning up hurt or dead when he is around.

One interesting aspect of Barber is the back and forth that he has with Logiudice. The two seem to have some sort of envy for one another. Barber taught Logiudice how to be a prosecutor. Now that he has taken over the role, Logiudice seems to let his power go to his head. He seems determined to discredit Barber. Although Barber never gets outwardly angry with Logiudice, he does feel somewhat vindicated when Logiudice does not get an indictment on Laurie's charges.

Bloody Billy Barber

Bloody Billy Barber is Andy Barber's father and Jacob's grandfather. Barber distanced himself from his father when he was still a young boy. His father was put in jail and is serving a life sentence for some heinous crime involving an empty building, a young girl and a knife. As a result of Jacob's murder charge, Andy Barber is manipulated into going to visit his father in order to get a DNA sample from him.

The elder Barber tries in his own twisted way to help his son and grandson when he learns the trouble they are in. Somehow he contacts Father O'Leary, an old gangster buddy of his and asks him to keep an eye on the family. One day after the trial, Billy Barber calls Andy Barber to cull information from him about the trial. He learns the Andy Barber believes that it was Patz who actually killed Ben Rifkin.



Billy Barber has O'Leary convince Patz to write a confession and then hang himself. Although Andy Barber confronts his father about interfering in the trial, Billy Barber will not confess any part in the crime. He truly believes that he has helped his grandson by keeping him from getting put in jail.

Dan Rifkin

Dan Rifkin is the father of Ben Rifkin, the father of the murdered boy. Before he knows that Jacob has been accused in his son's death, Dan reaches out to Barber in his attempt to understand why his son was murdered. On the day that the volunteers sweep the park in an attempt to find the murder weapon, Dan and Barber meet again. This time Dan is inflammatory, telling Barber that he believes that he is false and that he has asked that he be taken off the case. He tells Barber to call his office, suggesting that at that point he will learn he has been taken off the case. The next time the Barbers come into contact with the Rifkins is at the grocery store where Dan's wife spits on Laurie. Dan does nothing to stop the attack. Dan again appears at the end of the novel when he comes at the Barber family with a knife after Jacob's charges have been dismissed. It is uncertain what Dan meant to do with the knife as Father O'Leary takes it away from him before he has a chance to use it.

Jacob Barber

Jacob Barber is the son of Laurie and Andy Barber. He is the main suspect in the murder of Ben Rifkin, who was a classmate of his. Although his father has never noticed anything strange about Jacob's behavior, his mother, Laurie has noticed much that she believes is odd about the way the boy behaves. Classmates say that Jacob had a temper and that he bought a knife to protect himself from Ben. It is also said that he abused at least one animal. Through DNA testing, Dr. Vogel discovers that Jacob does share the "murder gene" with his father and grandfather. Vogel also diagnoses Jacob with Narcissistic Personality Disorder and Reactive Attachment Disorder. Although he denies it, it is also suspected that Jacob has something to do with the disappearance of Hope, his girlfriend at the Jamaican resort that he visits with his parents after his murder charges are expunged.

Paul Duffy

Paul Duffy is a lieutenant detective who works for the Massachusetts State Police. He was one of the main investigators on the case. He testifies that there was nothing unusual about Barber being on the trial but that he had suggested to him that he consider taking himself off the case just to save face. Duffy is also the officer who drives by Barber's house when he first notices the strange car driving around the neighborhood. When Barber is about the attack the man in the car with a baseball bat, Duffy drives up just in time to call him off. Duffy tells Barber the identity of the man, who is a former gangster. He also tells him about an unusual circumstance in which



Logiudice pleaded down a charge of rape on Patz to a much lesser charge of indecent assault and battery. Duffy is also the officer who first brings Patz to Barber's attention as a suspect in the Ben Rifkin murder.

Neal Logiudice

Neal Logiudice is an attorney who is up and coming in the district attorney's office. He seems to have some sort of envy for Barber and his position in the office. He has high aspirations which he destroys for himself by the way that he handles Ben Rifkin's murder trial. He continually accuses Barber of being in conflict of interest by being involved in the investigation of Ben's murder. He seems to be certain that he can find some evidence that Barber has covered in some way for his son's misdoing. When Patz turns up dead with a letter of confession, Jacob's charges are dismissed. With no charges against Jacob, there is no way for Logiudice to push charges against Barber. Logiudice, however, does get an opportunity to question Barber on the stand during a grand jury inquisition into murder charges against Laurie. Soon after Jacob's trial, Logiudice turns in his resignation and becomes a defense attorney. Barber believes that he will be disbarred.

Laurie Gold Barber

Laurie Gold Barber is Andy Barber's wife and Jacob Barber's mother. When the family visits the psychiatrist Laurie admits to Dr. Vogel that Jacob had always had strange ways about him. She even indicates that she could tell by his crawl when he was in a scary mood. Barber feels that Laurie is giving too much information to the doctor about Jacob. At one point in the novel he indicates that Laurie is trying to help Jacob, but in the end, she winds up hanging him. Laurie is the one who plants the knife in the park. She is also the one who arranges the car wreck that kills Jacob. Although her husband never agrees with her, Laurie has accepted the fact that Jacob could have been involved in the murder of both Ben and the death of Hope. She takes matters into her own hands and kills Jacob in an attempt to keep him from hurting any more innocent people.

Matthew Magrath

Matthew Magrath is the teenage boy who claims that Leonard Patz groped him at the library. When Barber talks to Magrath about Patz, Magrath tells Barber that he lied about the attack. Magrath explains that Patz had been paying him to feel his genitalia, but he had recently stopped giving him money because he was going after another boy. Magrath identifies the other boy as Ben Rifkin and tells Barber that Patz kept a knife with him in case he ever got in a bad position during a sexual proposition. Although Magrath claims that Patz killed Ben, Barber knows that he cannot put the boy on the stand because no one will believe him since he already has a criminal record and since he lied about Patz groping him.



Lynn Canavan

Lynn Canavan is the district attorney for whom Barber works at the beginning of the novel. Barber is angry with Canavan because she chooses to ask Barber not to be involved in Ben's murder case because his son is a suspect. Because Barber does not believe that his son was involved in the murder, he feels as if he has been wronged by being asked to step down. Although he tells Canavan that she needs to look into Patz, who he believes committed the murder, she dismisses his suggestion at Logiudice's suggestion. Barber feels vindicated when charges against Jacob are dropped when Patz writes a letter of confession and then kills himself. He believes that Canavan has gotten what she deserved for backing Logiudice instead of him.

Derek Yoo

Derek Yoo is a boy who has been friends with Jacob since grade school. It is Derek who puts on Jacob's Facebook page that it was Jacob who killed Ben and also notes that Jacob had a knife. Although Barber has been asked not to have any contact with Derek, he walks into the Yoo house one day and confronts the boy about what he told Logiudice. Derek not only tells the DA about Jacob's knife, he also tells about a story that Jacob uploaded to the Website Cutting Room that describes the murder of Ben Rifkin. Derek was also called to testify that Jacob had blood on him when he arrived at school the morning of the murder. Derek tells Jacob's father that even though they are friends, he had always thought that Jacob would get into trouble some day.

James O'Leary

James O'Leary aka Father O'Leary is the man whom the Barbers notice staking out their street during the days of the trial. Now in his fifties, O'Leary was a violent gangster. Now he is a "fixer" whom people can hire to shut people up, collect money or take care of other problems. At first, the family believes that O'Leary has been hired to take care of Jacob. Later, when the older man keeps Dan Rifkin from injuring any of the Barbers with a knife after the trial, Barber determines that the man has been hired to protect them. O'Leary tells Barber only that he is a friend of Barber's father and that his father asked him to look out for the family. Barber determines that it was O'Leary who convinced Patz to write the confession to Ben Rifkin's murder and then hang himself.

Leonard Patz

Leonard Patz is a pedophile who lives in an apartment complex adjacent to Cold Spring Park where Ben Rifkin was murdered. From the beginning, Barber believes that Patz had some responsibility in the murder even though Patz claims no responsibility. Patz has been paying Matthew Magrath to allow Patz to touch his genitalia. Patz angered Magrath by refusing to pay him for sexual favors any longer so Magrath lies and says Patz molested him. Magrath tells Barber that it was Patz who killed Ben. Barber shares



his suspicion that it was Patz who really killed Ben. For this reason, Father O'Leary visits Patz, encourages him to write a confession letter and hang himself.

Hope Connors

Hope Connors is the girl whom Jacob befriends when the family goes on vacation to Waves, a resort in Jamaica. Hope mysteriously disappears. Her body washes up on shore seven weeks later leading to the assumption she had drowned. It is suggested that Hope's windpipe had been crushed before she went into the water, but the investigation is botched. No arrests or accusations are ever made. Laurie thinks that Jacob had something to do with Hope's death.

Elizabeth Vogel

Elizabeth Vogel is the psychiatrist that Klein hires to talk to the Barbers and to carry out psychiatric testing on Jacob. Dr. Vogel turns out to be an expert in the role of genetic inheritance in behavior. She diagnoses Jacob as having a narcissistic personality disorder and a reactive attachment disorder. She is also the one who pushes Barber to get a DNA sample from his father, a request that lets Barber's father know the sort of problem in which the family is involved.

Lieutenant Detective Nils Peterson

Nils Peterson is one of the cops involved in Patz's questioning. He is also called by Logiudice to testify at Jacob's trial. Logiudice appears happy with himself when he arranges for Peterson to say that he was surprised that Barber had been involved in the case since it involved his own son. Peterson also testifies that Patz was never charged in the murder.

Judge Burton French

Judge Burton French is the judge who presides over Jacob's murder trial. He is furious when Logiudice brings up Barber's family history of violence when the DA had been specifically told not to mention that detail. Despite his fury, however, French does not rule the case a mistrial.

Benjamin Rifkin

Benjamin Rifkin is the boy who was murdered at the beginning of the novel. He is the son of Dan and Joan Rifkin. According to other students in the class, Jacob had gotten a knife because Ben had been bullying him. The students say Ben had been accusing Jacob of being gay.



Jonathan Klein

Jonathan Klein is the lawyer that the Barber's hire to represent their son in court. Klein is soft spoken and mild mannered. Although he doesn't necessarily believe there is a connection between Andy Barber's genetic ancestry and a tendency for violence in Jacob, he still decides to research the topic just in case it is brought into play by the DA.

Karen Rakowski

Karen Rakowski is the criminalist called to testify at Jacob's trial. She is called to talk about the murder scene and to testify that it was Jacob's fingerprint found on Ben's sweatshirt.

Judge Lourdes Rivera

Judge Lourdes Rivera is the judge who arraigns Jacob. She will not allow Logiudice to require a ridiculously high amount of bond in the case. She also throws out Logiudice's objection to allowing Klein to represent Jacob during the trial.

Joan Rifkin

Joan Rifkin is the mother of Ben Rifkin, the boy who was murdered. She is the one who spits in Laurie's face when the two come face to face in the neighborhood grocery store. Rifkin also calls the Barber family murderers.

Paula Giannitto

Paula Giannitto is the jogger who discovers Ben's body in Cold Spring Park. Since she thought the boy was only hurt and not dead, she rolled him over in an attempt to help him.

Sarah Groehl

Sarah Groehl is a student who attends the same school as Jacob and Ben. She is the one who draws Barber's attention to the Facebook page posted in honor of Ben Rifkin.



Symbols and Symbolism

Thursday, April 12, 2007

Thursday, April 12, 2007 is the day that Ben Rifkin is murdered in Cold Spring Park on his way to school.

A Single, Pristine Fingerprint

A single fingerprint appears to be the only evidence left by Ben's murderer. It is discovered that this fingerprint matches Jacob Barber's.

Facebook Group Called Friends of Ben Rifkin

Andy Barber receives a tip directing him to this Facebook page. It is from this page that Barber connects to his son's page where he first learns that his son has a knife.

Military Knife

After reading his son's Facebook page, Barber finds a knife with a serrated blade and hooked end in his son's drawer.

The Murder Gene

Although they pretend not to believe in this so called "murder gene," both Dr. Vogel and Klein want to have the living members of Barber's family checked to see if they have this gene.

Jacob's Laptop

Before the Barbers' house is searched, Barber momentarily considers hiding Jacob's laptop computer.

Ten Grand

Ten thousand dollars is the amount of the bond the judge in Jacob's case settles on to secure his release from jail.



Graffiti

Jacob and his family return from Jacob's arraignment to find the words "MURDERER – WE HATE YOU – ROT IN HELL" written on the side of their house.

October 17, 2007

October 17, 2007 is the day on which Jacob's trial is set to begin.

Marvin Glassock

Marvin Glassock is the pseudonym that Jacob chooses so that he can open a new Facebook page.

The Cutting Room

The Cutting Room is the porn site on which Barber finds a story that describes Ben's murder.

Jacob's iPod Touch

Jacob has been using his iPod Touch to access the website the Cutting Room. When Barber discovers the story that appears to be about Ben's murder, he smashes the iPod.

MAOA Knockout

MAOA Knockout is the gene suspected to be responsible for violent tendencies. Barber, his father, and his son all have this gene. It is also referred to in the novel as the murder gene.

Lincoln Town Car

A Lincoln Town Car is the type of vehicle that Barber and his family notice prowling around their neighborhood.

Spyderco Civilian

A Spyderco Civilian is the type knife that the DA suggests to the jury was used in Ben's murder.



Commonwealth's Exhibit Twenty-six

The story detailing Ben's murder, which Jacob had posted on the Cutting Room, is tagged as the commonwealth's twenty-sixth piece of evidence in the case.

Wusthof Classic Steak Knife

This Wusthof Classic steak knife is the type knife that Rifkin approaches the Barbers with after Jacob is pronounced innocent.

March 19, 2008

March 19, 2008 is the date of the car wreck in which Laurie purposefully drives her minivan into a concrete abutment, killing Jacob.



Settings

Middlesex County Courthouse

The Middlesex County Courthouse is where Barber worked as First Assistant District Attorney and also where Jacob's case is tried.

Cold Spring Park

Cold Spring Park is where Ben Rifkin was murdered one morning as he walked through the park on his way to school.

McCormick School

McCormick School is where both Jacob and Ben attended middle school.

Whalley Avenue Jail in New Haven

Whalley Avenue Jail in New Haven is the last place that Barber saw his father.

Play Structure Behind Elementary School

Jacob is hiding in the play structure behind Newton's elementary school when officers find him and arrest him for Ben's murder.

Windsor Apartments

Windsor Apartments is an apartment complex that adjoins Cold Spring Park. It is in these apartments that Leonard Patz lives.

McLean Hospital

McLean Hospital is where the Barbers meet with Dr. Vogel.

Starbucks in Newton Center

It is at this Starbucks in Newton Center that Barber meets with Sarah to find out if she knows anything else about Ben's murder.



Northern Prison in Somers Connecticut

Northern Prison in Somers, Connecticut, is where Barber's father is serving out his life sentence when Barber goes to him to get a DNA sample.

Whole Foods

Whole Foods is the grocery store in which the Barbers come face to face with the Rifkins. Joan Rifkin spits in Laurie's face and calls the family murderers.

Peet's Coffee Shop in Newton Centre

It is determined that the story about Ben's murder that was sent to Derek was sent using the wireless network at Peet's Coffee Shop in Newton Centre. The device sending the story cannot be traced past this network.

Waves

Waves is the resort to which the Barbers escape after Jacob is found innocent. It is here that Jacob's girlfriend turns up missing. Then, she is discovered drowned.



Themes and Motifs

Nature or Nurture

The question of whether nature, the genes, and DNA makeup a child is born with, or nurture, the way they are brought up, is more important in the way that a child turns out. Laurie argues to the mothers gathered at their children's school in the beginning of the novel that she doesn't think it matters much what they do, children are already hard wired to be what they will be. This idea is the basis of the murder gene. Psychologists believe that if a person has this gene, it automatically predisposes them to a violent nature regardless of the kind of environment in which a child is raised. On the flip side of this coin, however, is Barber. Although he has at least three generations before him that have fallen prey to their genetic makeup, Barber has not done so. When he is tested, Barber has the same "murder gene" as his father and son. Seeing what his father's behavior did to his family may have been what it took to keep Barber from following in the footsteps of his father. Jacob, however, was not even aware this tendency was in his family until his teens, so he had no idea that he needed to guard against it. When Barber asks his son why it is so important to him that he was never told about the presence of this murder gene Jacob tells his father "That's who I am." This may be Jacob's way of saying that he has already recognized the tendency in himself and wonders why he feels and acts the way he does.

Justifiable Murder

Justifiable murder is another topic that is played with in the course of this novel. The major example of a person committing a murder that might, in some way, be considered justifiable is Laurie and her car wreck. To a certain extent, the jury must have considered what Laurie did to Jacob justifiable as they chose not to indict Laurie with a murder charge. Knowing that her son was a danger to society, Laurie put him to death. Logiudice seems to be the only one in the court who cannot understand how much the Barber family has already been through and that the label of a guilty verdict is not going to fix anything at that point in their lives.

Another example of this justifiable murder is nowhere near as clear cut as the first example. When Andy Barber goes to confront his father about what happened to Patz, he suggests that Billy Barber should not have had Patz killed as Jacob would have been found innocent anyway. Billy Barber, however, has very different ideas about why he should have arranged Patz's death. First, he believes Andy Barber is telling the truth when he tells him that Patz is the one responsible for Ben's death. Since Andy Barber has said it, Billy Barber believes it. Hardened by jail, Billy Barber also believes that child molesters are disposable. He thinks that even if Patz were not guilty of the murder, he has still ridden the world of a pedophile. Had this case gone before a grand jury, O'Leary or Billy Barber probably would have been indicted for a murder, but as Billy Barber points out, if Patz didn't kill Ben, that puts the question of guilt back on Jacob.



Parental Responsibility

One of the questions that Laurie dares to ask, even though her husband cannot fathom the possibility, is what responsibility she and Andy have to Jacob as his parents. This parental responsibility occurs at two different levels for Laurie. First, Laurie wonders if it is something that she, as a mother, did wrong to make Jacob the way that he is.

Reactive Attachment Disorder is generally associated with some sort of abuse during childhood which Jacob did not have. This disorder can also arise in children sent to day care. Laurie questions why out of all the children sent to day care in their neighborhood did her son wind up with such a serious emotional issue.

Laurie also wants to know what she can do to help Jacob. Her idea is to reform him and keep him from hurting anyone else if that is truly what he has done in the past. Had Jacob been found guilty of killing Ben, the state would have taken over Jacob's care and reformation. He would have been locked up away from innocent people. Because of intervention by Jacob's grandfather, however, the jury is never given the chance to give a verdict. He is released as an innocent person. When Hope disappears, Laurie knows that it isn't coincidence. Jacob again is not found guilty of the crime, in fact he is not even arrested in connection with the crime, but Laurie knows that Jacob was somehow involved. Knowing that her husband will not support her in her desire to help her son, Laurie takes matters into her own hands and kills Jacob by purposefully driving the family minivan into a bridge abutment. She has already indicated to her husband that she feels that since they know something is wrong with Jacob, they are partially responsible if he hurts someone else. This is Laurie's way of protecting other from the son whom she loves, but also knows is dangerous.



Styles

Point of View

The story is told from two different points of view. The majority of the story is told by Andy Barber as the family goes through the ordeal of a murder charge and trial. The court recorder is the second person whose point of view is used in the novel. The point of view comes into play in the sections of the novel that are direct transcripts of the grand jury inquisition. Since these are legal documents, this court recorder could almost be considered as third person omniscient in terms of the inquisition narrative.

As the intent of the story is to leave the reader wondering if Jacob is really guilty or not, it is best that Andy Barber serve as the narrator. Even with all of the evidence that is presented against Jacob and the instances, such as O'Leary's involvement in the case, that suggest Jacob might not be innocent, Barber is the only one who maintains that his son did nothing wrong. When Laurie tries to get her husband to consider the possibility that Jacob might have the same violent tendencies as his grandfather, Barber will not consider the idea. Being a person who is accustomed to being in court and dealing with criminals, it seems that Barber would be a pretty good judge of character, but when it comes to his son, Barber is completely blind. It is his belief in his son that keeps it in the reader's mind that there is always the slim possibility that Jacob is not guilty.

Language and Meaning

Although this is a novel that is very dependent on the language and process of the court, this language and process is explained so that the reader doesn't get lost in any legalese. For instance, when Barber first talks about his inquisition by the grand jury, he explains the purpose of the jury and what they will hope to accomplish during the inquisition. As Barber watches Logiudice go through the actions of the prosecution, Barber is able to explain to the reader what he is doing and why he is doing it by way of critiquing Logiudice's style.

Also included in the novel are various scientific and psychological terms. Often spoken of is a "murder gene" which it is suspected Jacob, Barber and his ancestors had. This gene is supposed to predispose one for a violent disposition. The psychological terms come into play when Jacob is evaluated by Dr. Vogel. She diagnoses him with two different psychological disorders. Both disorders are explained in the process of Dr. Vogel telling the Barbers about the meaning and treatments for Jacob's disorders.

Structure

This novel is divided into four parts which each part addressing a specific part of the story of Jacob's trial. The first part of the novel tells the story of the discovery of the murdered boy and the initial investigation up to Jacob's arrest for Ben Rifkin's murder.



The second part of the novel deals with Jacob and his family's preparation for his trial. It is during this part of the novel that the family visits Dr. Vogel and the truth about Barber's background comes out. The third part of the novel covers the trial from the beginning up to the point that Patz is found dead with a letter confessing that he killed Ben Rifkin. The charges against Jacob are dismissed and the family learns that Father O'Leary had actually been working on their side and not against them. The fourth part of the novel covers what happens after Jacob's trial. This includes the family's trip to Jamaica where Hope disappears as well as the car wreck that Laurie intentionally causes to kill Jacob.

This story is a modified frame story as it is told based on the "frame" of Barber's grand jury inquisition. The novel both begins and ends with snippets of this inquisition. Portions of the inquisition are also spattered throughout the novel when needed to help clarify what is happening or given the reader needed information. The story of Jacob's arrest and murder trial happened prior to the actual "real" time of the novel, about a year after the murder.



Quotes

Anyway, the point is, I just think we flatter ourselves when we say we can engineer our kids to be this way or that way. It's mostly just hardwired.

-- Laurie Barber (Part 1, Chapter 3, Back to School paragraph 90)

Importance: This quote is significant because it describes Laurie's opinion of the influence parents actually have on their children. Her unbiased view, before Jacob is accused of murder, is that children are hardwired to be one way or another. The parents have very little control over the way their kids turn out.

Jacob and his friends have a slang term, mindfuck, which describes tormenting someone by misleading him, usually by withholding a crucial fact.

-- Andrew Barber (Part 1, Chapter 4, Mindfuck paragraph 5)

Importance: The idea of the mindfuck is significant to this novel because this novel involves the very technique described by the term.

But something odd happened. After just three or four interviews, Paul and I had the distinct impression we were being stonewalled.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 5)

Importance: As Barber and other officers interview the students at Ben's school, they begin to get the feeling that the students are not telling them something significant to the case.

I have a mean streak, deep down. Trust me.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 96)

Importance: Barber tells Sarah, Jacob and Ben's classmate that he has a mean streak when she asks about the good cop/bad cop routine. The statement is ironic because Barber may be referring to the tendency toward violence that runs in his family, a tendency about which he tries to avoid talking.

I stopped at Jacob's name — at the realization that these last venomous messages were aimed at my Jacob.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 124)

Importance: When Barber's attention is drawn to the Facebook page set up in Ben's memory, he is surprised to read how much animosity there is toward his son. He doesn't seem to notice, however, the unfeeling message that Jacob has posted on the site.

As a couple, we believed that you raise a child with good values and then you give him space, you trust him to behave responsibly, at least until he gives you reason not to.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 125)



Importance: These thoughts of Barber indicate why he and Laurie had not monitored Jacob's website more closely and why they did not realize what was being said about him online.

Jake, everyone knows you did it. You have a knife. I've seen it.

-- Derek Yoo (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 135)

Importance: This statement, posted on Jacob's Facebook page by a friend of his, would seem to be damning evidence against Jacob especially when Barber finds the knife in Jacob's room. Barber doesn't seem to realize how bad things look for his son.

You are trying to mislead this jury. You are suggesting that Jacob could inherit a tendency to violence, as if violence were the same as red hair or hairy ears. That's wrong on the biology and wrong on the law. In a word, it's bullshit.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 6, Descent paragraph 31)

Importance: It is in this statement to Logiudice that Barber tries to summarize his opinion of violence being a tendency that can be inherited.

It's fair to say you're descended from a long line of violent men, aren't you, Mr. Barber?

-- Neal Logiudice (Part 1, Chapter 6, Descent paragraph 44)

Importance: Logiudice points out Barber's history of violent ancestors in an attempt to argue that Barber worried about himself falling prey to a genetic disposition to violence.

Oh, Laurie, you never got it! I never intended to 'deal with it.' I intended to stop it cold.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 6, Descent paragraph 49)

Importance: When Barber considers his wife's view that he needs to deal with his feelings about his father, he thinks to himself that his family's background is not something that needs to be dealt with but stopped.

There is a more mundane explanation too: it just never came up. It turns out there is no good time in the average day to announce to your wife that you are the son of a murderer.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 6, Descent paragraph 69)

Importance: This statement describes Barber's reasoning for never telling Laurie about his ancestry.

Logiudice was half right: by this point I did suspect Jacob, but not of murder.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 7, Denial paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote is an example of thoughts by Barber that are written in such a way that they first make the reader think that Barber is beginning to get suspicious of his son but then twist the meaning with a "but" phrase.



Jacob's homicide charge was a grenade — we would all inevitably be destroyed by it; only the details remained to be worked out — but a strange, calm urgency came over me.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 8, The End paragraph 126)

Importance: These are Barber's words describing how he is feeling when he first learns that his son is about to be arrested for Ben Rifkin's murder. The mention of the homicide being a grenade is also misleading as it is understandable that such a charge would destroy a family but it is not fully understood how the charge will specifically destroy the family.

Our blind trust in the system is the product of ignorance and magical thinking, and there was no way in hell I was going to trust my son's fate to it.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 8, The End paragraph 136)

Importance: Despite Barber's claims to Logiudice during his grand jury inquisition after Jacob has been arrested about his belief in the American justice system, the way that Barber acts and thinks when it is his family member who is on the wrong side of the law that gives away how he really feels about his trust in the legal system.

Anyway, as far as I know, there is no such thing as a genetic tendency to violence.

-- Jonathan Klein (Part 2, Chapter 10, Leopards paragraph 46)

Importance: These are the words that Jacob's lawyer says to Jacob because he seems overwrought with the idea that he might be genetically predestined to have a violent nature. One of the major themes of the novel deals with whether a violent nature can be passed down from generation to generation or not.

But Dad, it's who I am.

-- Jacob Barber (Part 2, Chapter 10, Leopards paragraph 83)

Importance: This quote by Jacob can be interpreted two ways. It can either be thought that Jacob is angry with his father for not telling him about his ancestry because he has a right to know where he came from, or Jacob can be hinting to his parents that he already feels this odd tendency to violence in his own personality.

Maybe you just never learned to play your cello. Doesn't mean you don't have the talent.

-- Jacob Barber (Part 2, Chapter 10, Leopards paragraph 126)

Importance: Just prior to this quote, Klein has commented that some people think violence, like talents, can be handed down from generation to generation. He reasons that just because a person has a certain talent doesn't necessarily mean they will learn to use it. When Jacob's father points out that he has never been violent, Jacob rebuts that just because he didn't learn to play his cello, or be violent, didn't mean he didn't inherit the ability.



Laurie was so determined to help Jacob, she nearly hung him.
-- Andy Barber (Part 2, Chapter 12, Confessions paragraph 4)

Importance: Barber precedes his description of the family's meeting with Dr. Vogel with this statement about his wife. He seems to think that Laurie shared too much information about Jacob with the psychiatrist that was not of any real significance to the case, but could be made to appear that way.

Actually Ben had been kind of a bully to Jake for a long time, you know? It wasn't like that makes anyone a murderer, all right? But it was just kind of something I thought you guys should know.

-- Sarah Groehl (Part 2, Chapter 5, Playing Detective paragraph 41)

Importance: These are the words that Sarah uses to describe why she brought Barber's attention to the Facebook page dedicated to Ben's memory. This page, in turn, led Barber to discover the knife his son had hidden in his drawer.

But I know Lenny had a knife and he took it with him when he thought he might be meeting people, because he said sometimes, you know, if you're like a fag and you go up to the wrong guy, it can be bad.

-- Matthew Magrath (Part 2, Chapter 16, Witness paragraph 149)

Importance: This testimony by Matthew Magrath is what Barber had been hoping for to prove that Leonard Patz had motive and reason to kill Ben Rifkin.

We need his help. We need a sample to argue that a genetic mutation is more than a one-off but a family trait passed down from father to son to son.

-- Dr. Vogel (Part 2, Chapter 18, The Murder Gene, Redux paragraph 64)

Importance: These words from Dr. Vogel are the last that Barber wants to hear about the father that he has tried so long to keep out of his life.

The outrageous possibility that my son would be sacrificed to save this man became an obsession.

-- Andy Barber (Part 2, Chapter 21, Beware the Fury of a Patient Man paragraph 4)

Importance: As preparation for Jacob's trial continues, Barber feels more and more desperate to prove that Leonard Patz, the neighborhood pedophile, is the one who actually committed the murder.

Me, I told myself that in court I could make things turn out right — that when I won, justice was served. You can get drunk on such thinking, and in Jacob's case I was.

-- Andy Barber (Part 3, Chapter 24, It's Different For Mothers paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote describes Barber's feelings that in court he had some sort of special ability to make things turn out as he believed they should.



He seems to regard other people not just as less significant than himself, but as less human.

-- Dr. Vogel (Part 3, Chapter 28, Verdict paragraph 30)

Importance: One of the findings of Dr. Vogel's psychiatric tests on Jacob show how little he respects and values other people, a symptom of reactive attachment disorder.

I had a sinking sense that this whole trial did not matter. It was already too late. Dr. Vogel's verdict mattered at least as much as this one would.

-- Andy Barber (Part 3, Chapter 29, The Burning Monk paragraph 7)

Importance: Although Jacob has not yet been found guilty by a jury, Barber's feeling is that Dr. Vogel's announcement about his mental disorders is more damning than a guilty verdict might be.

Did it strike you by this time that there was something inappropriate about Andy Barber working this case when his son's school was involved?

-- Neal Logiudice (Part 3, Chapter 30, The Third Rail paragraph 127)

Importance: Logiudice seems to be determined that Barber should never have been involved in the investigation of Ben Rifkin's murder though it was not known at the time that a student at the school, much less Barber's own son, was a suspect in the crime. Logiudice poses this question to police detective Duffy during Jacob's trial.

Certain aspects of the investigation had to be carried out without Mr. Barber knowing.

-- Paul Duffy (Part 3, Chapter 30, The Third Rail paragraph 156)

Importance: This quote explains why Barber might have felt so out of touch with this case at the beginning even though he was investigating it.

But if the prosecution insists on this bizarre insinuation that the defendant somehow is guilty by inheritance, that he is a member of a criminal family, born a murderer, then we have a right to rebut that.

-- Jonathan Klein (Part 3, Chapter 30, The Third Rail paragraph 272)

Importance: Klein defends his right to call for a mistrial after Logiudice mentions Barber's heritage even after he had specifically been told to keep it out of the trial by the judge.

It was as if we had all just decided something. You could read it in the faces of the jurors and Judge French, you could hear it in the supreme quiet of the crowd: Jacob was not going to walk out of that courtroom, not out the front door anyway.

-- Andy Barber (Part 3, Chapter 34, Jacob Was Mad paragraph 258)

Importance: Barber gets the feeling after hearing Derek Yoo's testimony at Jacob's trial, especially that about the story Jacob put on Cutting Room, that the jury has made up its mind that Jacob is guilty.



Andy, what if we're the ones who are wrong? What if he gets off and then, God forbid, he does it again? Don't we have some responsibility?

-- Laurie Barber (Part 3, Chapter 35, Argentina paragraph 82)

Importance: After Laurie and Barber finish comforting Jacob and quieting his concerns about going back to court, Laurie poses this question to Barber once they are alone. It is the first hint that she gives that she feels responsible for what Jacob may have become.

I would not find out until the next morning what that siren was and how, unknown to us, everything had already changed. We were already in Argentina.

-- Andy Barber (Part 3, Chapter 35, Argentina paragraph 126)

Importance: It is in this last sentence of Chapter 35 that the reader is given the idea that something has just happened that will influence Jacob's trial in a positive way.

It was better than a not guilty from the jury. We kept saying this: not guilty is merely a failure of proof. Jacob had actually been proven innocent. It was as if the entire horrific episode was erased.

-- Andy Barber (Part 3, Chapter 35, Helluva Show paragraph 24)

Importance: The Barbers celebrate that Jacob had been released from any implication of guilt by Patz's confession and suicide.

And who would risk the stigma of being seen with him? He was a pariah, whether he was actually guilty or not.

-- Andy Barber (Part 4, Chapter 37, After-Life paragraph 5)

Importance: Although he had been proved innocent by Patz's confession, Jacob's old friends will still have nothing to do with him because of the stigma of his murder charge.

She had to figure out what to do about Logiudice, the Rasputin in her court, whose professional implosion had surely ended his own political hopes and, if she was not careful, might end hers too.

-- Andy Barber (Part 4, Chapter 37, After-life paragraph 9)

Importance: Suspicion has been aroused that Logiudice might have had reason to cover up for Patz, the man who confessed to Ben Rifkin's murder. Because Canavan had followed Logiudice's lead in not following up in Patz's questioning, she must know try to distance herself from the bad name that Logiudice has made for himself.

You took away his chance to hear the jury say 'not guilty.' From now on, there'll always be a little doubt.

-- Andy Barber (Part 4, Chapter 38, The Policeman's Dilemma paragraph 48)

Importance: Although Barber had once celebrated that his son is proved innocent by Patz's confession, he now shows anger to his father because he suspects that he arranged the confession. Barber is not so much worried about what the general public



might think of Jacob's role in the crime, but for Barber there will always be some doubt of Jacob's innocence.

I know this story is all a very solemn business. Ben Rifkin had still been murdered, even if it had not been by Jacob. And Jacob had only been saved by the intervention of a second murder arranged by a deus ex prison — a secret only I was aware of.

-- Andy Barber (Part 4, Chapter 39, Paradise paragraph 21)

Importance: Even while the family is on vacation, trying to get away from the stress of Jacob's accusation and trial, author Landay reminds his reader through these thoughts of Barber that the Barber family is not finished with their nightmare yet.

It was murder, Andy. She murdered your son.

-- Neal Logiudice (Part 4, Chapter 40, No Way Out paragraph 143)

Importance: It is with this statement by Logiudice that the reader finally learns why Barber is testifying before the grand jury. He is not in trouble for any of his involvement in Jacob's case. It is instead Laurie who faces an indictment for murder for killing Jacob by slamming the family minivan into a concrete abutment.

Anyway, the point is, I just think we flatter ourselves when we say we can engineer our kids to be this way or that way. It's mostly just hardwired.

-- Laurie Barber (Part 1, Chapter 3, Back to School paragraph 90)

Importance: This quote is significant because it describes Laurie's opinion of the influence parents actually have on their children. Her unbiased view, before Jacob is accused of murder, is that children are hardwired to be one way or another, there's little control the parents have over the way their kids turn out.

Jacob and his friends have a slang term, mindfuck, which describes tormenting someone by misleading him, usually by withholding a crucial fact.

-- Andrew Barber (Part 1, Chapter 4, Mindfuck paragraph 5)

Importance: The idea of the mindfuck is significant to this novel because this novel involves the very technique described by the term.

But something odd happened. After just three or four interviews, Paul and I had the distinct impression we were being stonewalled.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 5)

Importance: As Barber and other officers interview the students at Ben's school, they begin to get the feeling that the students are not telling them something significant to the case.

I have a mean streak, deep down. Trust me.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 96)



Importance: Barber tells Sarah, Jacob, and Ben's classmate that he has a mean streak when she asks about the good cop/bad cop routine. The statement is ironic because Barber may be referring to the tendency toward violence that runs in his family, a tendency about which he tries to avoid talking.

I stopped at Jacob's name — at the realization that these last venomous messages were aimed at my Jacob.

-- Andy Barber (Part 1, Chapter 5, Everybody Knows You Did It paragraph 124)

Importance: When Barber's attention is drawn to the Facebook page set up in Ben's memory, he is surprised to read how much animosity there is toward his son. He doesn't seem to notice, however, the unfeeling message that Jacob has posted on the site.

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Importance: When Barber considers his wife's view that he needs to deal with his



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Importance: These are the words that Jacob's lawyer says to Jacob because he seems overwrought with the idea that he might be genetically predestined to have a violent nature. One of the major themes of the novel deals with whether a violent nature can be passed down from generation to generation or not.



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